

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Belarus

Annual Report 2014

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MAABY002

30 April 2015

**This report covers the
period
from 1 January 2014
to 31 December 2014.**

Active Red Cross volunteer group in a secondary school reaches the most at risk youth in the small village of Novka with a total population of 2,624 people. Vitebsk region. Photo: Belarus Red Cross



Overview

In the 2010s, Belarus is still facing several challenges related to humanitarian issues, like the Chernobyl legacy, the growing incidence of trafficking in human beings, TB and HIV, and a serious demographic crisis, marked by declining life expectancy, high mortality and morbidity, rapid population ageing and deteriorating health.

Being located at the crossroads between East and West and having an essentially open border with Russia, an increasing number of Belarusians have been exposed to trafficking. Belarus is a source and transit country for women, men and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour.

According to official statistics, a total of 5,102 victims of human trafficking (VoTs) have been identified in Belarus from January 2002 to November 2014, 564 out of whom are minors. The highest numbers of identified cases are related to sexual exploitation (4,463). Trafficking in males has been under-considered despite noteworthy signals that it is a violation faced by many males, both adults and minors. Severely exploited male migrants are often overlooked as VoT. According to newest tendencies, more and more persons fall victim of trafficking internally in Belarus than outside of the country.

HIV prevalence in Belarus continues to rise, with 100 Belarusians infected every month. At 1 December 2014, the number of people registered as HIV-positive in Belarus reached 17,344. The most severely affected age group are young people between 15 and 29, who make up 53.4 per cent of all HIV-infected persons. However, increasing numbers of new HIV cases are now being diagnosed in the age group of 30 and above. Infection through sexual intercourse has been most common of HIV transmission in Belarus for several years. However, injection drug use is also responsible for a large percentage of HIV disease (39.6 per cent). Currently, over 16,000 people are officially registered as drug-dependent persons, thousands more serve sentences in prison and are treated anonymously.

Women make up a growing proportion of the HIV-positive population in Belarus, and the overall new infection rate continues to climb. The share of women in the total number of HIV-infected patients

has reached 40.8 per cent (42.8 per cent over 11 months of 2014). Women in Belarus are particularly vulnerable to sexual transmission of HIV because of duress and violence that work against the use of contraception in an environment with low standards of reproductive health. In this context, Belarus Red Cross works closely together with the authorities and other organizations to introduce gender-sensitive approaches to injection drug users and HIV-infected women.

More than 500,000 people with disabilities reside in Belarus, of them approximately 100,000 are disabled with mental illnesses, including 22,000 people with schizophrenia. Only five per cent of such patients are looked after in the day-and-night clinics; the remaining 95 per cent lives in the open society, most of them require social and psychological rehabilitation. The bulk of care still takes place in a hospital setting with very limited rehabilitation available, e.g. some social rehabilitation or occupational therapy. There are no community care facilities, and community care services are not yet developed. After the patients get treatment, it is difficult for them to continue rehabilitation in hospitals because of stigma (including their internal stigma). In this regard, the rehabilitation of people having mental illnesses is increasingly becoming the centre of attention of Red Cross, NGOs and the church.

Belarus ranked first in the world in terms of per capita alcohol consumption according to the World Health Organisation's latest review of worldwide drinking patterns. In Belarus, those aged 15 or older, drink an average of 17.5 litres per person, while men consume as much as 27.5 litres per person (the average figure globally is 6.2 litres of pure alcohol per person each year).

Because of the close commercial ties, the economic crisis in Russia and a fall in global oil prices pose a serious challenge to the Belarusian economy. At the end of December 2014, people in Belarus began to strip store shelves bare before the national currency, which has lost close to 50 per cent of its value since the beginning of the year, slipped further. A banking panic has also taken hold, as worried savers have begun to withdraw their life savings over fears that the banks might collapse.

Since June 2014, Belarus has seen increasing numbers of people fleeing the areas of conflict in Ukraine. As of 23 December 2014, the authorities in Belarus reported that the number of asylum applications reached 652, while some 59,600 are reportedly seeking other forms of legal stay¹. Every week Belarus Red Cross headquarters and its eight regional branches receive on average 130 people who either have come to Belarus recently or have just learned about the Red Cross as a potential source of assistance to them. There are also others who come to ask for assistance repeatedly. In total, some 7,738 displaced people have applied for assistance to Belarus Red Cross headquarters and branches (as compared with 5,900 applicants in mid-October 2014).

This situation also influences the functioning of the Belarus Red Cross, since the National Society has to stretch its capacities to meet the growing needs of the vulnerable population groups.

At present, Belarus Red Cross countrywide network consists of eight regional (including Minsk City and Railway organizations), 160 district/town/railway branches and 8,202 primary units (grass-root organizations). With a total of 361 paid staff, including 144 visiting nurses in 45 medico-social centres, and more than 22,268 volunteers Belarus Red Cross is well prepared to effectively run the activities supported by the IFRC Secretariat and other partners.

¹ Source: UNHCR operation update, Operational Update - 31 December 2014

Working in partnership

The Belarus Red Cross has good cooperation relationships with eight partner National Societies, the IFRC Secretariat, ICRC, UN agencies, and the IOM. The main international bilateral and multilateral partners within the Movement are the ICRC delegation in Moscow, the Danish, Swiss, Austrian, Norwegian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, and American Red Cross Societies. In the national arena traditional partners are the ministries of health, social welfare, emergency, justice, internal affairs and education, national centre for blood donation, national AIDS centre, governmental and non-governmental organizations, universities and other educational institutions, mass media and enterprises.

Operational Partners	Agreement
ICRC, IFRC Secretariat, Danish Red Cross	Movement Coordination Agreement
ICRC, Regional Delegation in Russian Federation, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine	Agreement on strategic partnership 2012-2016
Azerbaijan Red Crescent	Memorandum of Understanding
Bulgarian Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
Georgian Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
German Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
Italian Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
Kyrgyz Red Crescent	Memorandum of Understanding
Latvian Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
Lithuanian Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding.
Polish Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
Russian Red Cross	Memorandum of Understanding
Uzbekistan Red Crescent	Memorandum of Understanding
Chernobyl Medical Support Network (Japan)	Cooperation Agreement
Ministry of Health	Cooperation Agreement
Ministry of Emergencies	Cooperation Agreement
Ministry of Education	Cooperation Agreement
Coca-Cola company	Non-commercial Cooperation Agreement

Progress towards outcomes

Business line 1: To raise humanitarian standards

Output 1.1: Promote Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values and mainstream those in programmes.

Monitoring	
Indicators	Year to Date Actual
1.1.1. Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values are integrated in new projects and programmes in 2013.	Continuous activity
Comments on progress towards outcomes	
Components of dissemination of humanitarian values and reduction of stigma and discrimination were incorporated in new and ongoing programmes such as <i>Integration of ex-offenders into society</i> , <i>Support to people with mental illnesses</i> , <i>Youth volunteering to fight trafficking in human beings</i> , and <i>Enhanced access for female IDUs to HIV prevention and harm reduction services</i> .	

Business line 2: To grow Red Cross Red Crescent services for vulnerable people.**Output 2.1.1.:** Support provided to Belarus Red Cross upon request, based on own developed DR/DP plans

Monitoring		
Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
2.1.1. Belarus Red Cross receives the needed technical support.	Continuous activity	
Comments on progress towards outcomes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In June 2014, the IFRC Secretariat supported participation of Belarus Red Cross delegation in <i>Best Practice Sharing Workshop</i> in Dublin to learn from the Irish Red Cross Community Based Health and First Aid Prison Programme. With the IFRC Secretariat's support, Belarus Red Cross initiated a pilot project <i>First Aid Training Course for elderly people</i>. The project included translation and adaptation of FA materials (<i>FA for elderly people: Trainer and Participant Guide</i>) into Russian, introduction of the course to FA trainers and start-up FA training for older people in Grodno region. Materials of the course First Aid training for older people were translated into Russian with financial support from the IFRC Secretariat's Europe Zone Office. A ToT to introduce FA training for older people was conducted on 14-16 July 2014 for the team of FA trainers (eight people) of Belarus Red Cross from Minsk City, Gomel, Grodno, Brest, Vitebsk and Mogilev regional branches. In the course of the ToT, the trainers finalized the programme of the FA training course for older people. A pilot FA training for elderly people was tested in the region (Grodno) on 18 July 2014. The FA course for older people is very much in demand among the community groups working under Belarus Red Cross project <i>Visiting Nurses Service</i> supported by Swiss Red Cross and <i>Seniors' Empowerment and Engagement in Decision-making Processes</i> supported by Austrian Red Cross. This course or elements of the course are now available for Belarus Red Cross staff and volunteers as part of the FA education programme in six regional branches of the National Society. The materials of the FA training for older people are also available for sharing with the Russian-speaking National Societies. Belarus Red Cross, in cooperation with the IFRC Secretariat's Country Representation in Minsk and PMER Unit of the IFRC Secretariat's Europe Zone Office jointly organized a workshop for project managers, Disaster Management practitioners, and PMER practitioners of Belarus Red Cross, with focus on an evaluation tool known as Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey (BSS) from 15 October until 17 October 2014 in Minsk, Belarus. The three-day long training aimed to guide NS staff members and / or volunteers who are involved in project implementation to improve accountability towards people receiving assistance during disaster response, to analyse Belarus Red Cross' population displacement response operation using the vouchers system; to learn from cash transfer programme experiences of similar operations in Turkey and Ukraine and to get better understanding to the IFRC's emergency response tools and mechanisms. During the reporting period, Belarus Red Cross hosted <i>Healthy Life Style Master Training</i> for Russian speaking RC/RC National Societies that was held between 2 December – 5 December 2014 in Minsk with the support of the IFRC Secretariat's Europe Zone Office. The <i>Healthy Life Style Master Training</i> was held to train National Societies key staff on delivery of the module, practicing the use of the actual materials during the training. The Master Training built a cadre of RC/RC master trainers to rollout and implement this Module in Europe Zone. The IFRC Secretariat's Europe Zone Office also supported Belarus Red Cross with two consultancy missions to assist the National Society in moving towards cash transfer and in preparing costing policy and establishing an indirect cost recovery system. 		

Output 2.1.3: Psychosocial support to victims of disasters is provided in accordance with Federation standards

Monitoring	
Indicators	Year to Date Actual
2.1.3. Belarus Red Cross PSS service offers support in crisis situations.	Target achieved with the National Society PSS established and providing regular services as and when required
Comments on progress towards outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2014, a contribution of CHF 25,865 from Japanese Red Cross supported the efforts of Belarus Red Cross in addressing the stress-related challenges among returnees to the villages in Chernobyl affected areas and vulnerable elderly people relocated to Minsk from the radiation contaminated areas. In addition, the most vulnerable children and elderly people in the Chernobyl-affected areas were provided with 3,450 packs of multivitamins Duokaps (207,000 tablets). The support of Japanese Red Cross contributed to reaching out a total of 4,000 children, their family members, disabled and elderly living in the areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster or relocated to the city of Minsk. The project's target groups benefited from psychological support provided through individual counselling, self-help and group work, referrals to other organizations, distribution of vitamins and educational materials. The project team also facilitated the establishment of seven self-help community groups belonging to the most vulnerable segments of population such as elderly and disabled. Group members received valuable information on safety rules when living in contaminated areas, coping and self-support mechanisms. Each meeting had a different focus with regards to the topic discussed, e.g. healthy aging, information on rights and benefits, etc. The topics were suggested by group members themselves. To ensure sustainability, these groups were linked to the state-run pilot project on creation of self-governance groups at local level. Furthermore, the project <i>Psychosocial support in crisis</i> was instrumental in making the National Society psychosocial support services more sustainable, establishing a Red Cross community information and counselling centre and integrating psychosocial support (PSS) in the functioning of its regional emergency response teams. Belarus Red Cross currently has a total of 144 Red Cross staff and volunteers trained to provide psychosocial support according to IFRC standards. The project engaged 20 PSS volunteer instructors, 22 volunteer members of PSS team and 19 volunteers of the Red Cross community information and counselling centre, a total of 61 volunteers. 	

Output 2.2.1: Support Belarus Red Cross in undertaking needs assessments and addressing disaster relief needs

Monitoring		
Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
2.2.1. Belarus Red Cross DR team is assisted in the use of DREF/Emergency Appeal tools in time of disaster as and when required.	DREF/Emergency Appeal tool is activated in time of disaster	Target achieved
Comments on progress towards outcomes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sudden onset of extremely cold winter in January 2014 caught many Belarusians completely unprepared, especially homeless, drivers and city dwellers who need to travel long distances by public transport or by foot. The IFRC Secretariat supported Belarus Red Cross response efforts with a DREF 		

allocation of CHF 25,920 for *Extreme Weather Conditions* to provide immediate assistance to 12,000 people. According to the final report on this DREF-funded operation issued on 22 July 2014, Belarus Red Cross assisted a total of 15,583 people, including 13,927 city dwellers, 1,003 homeless people and 653 drivers people, either stuck on the roads or waiting in line at border crossings. 1,003 homeless people received hot meals during the entire period of extremely cold weather and were also provided with warm clothing and blankets. Warming-up stations and distribution points operated daily in 40 towns of Belarus providing hot drinks and making feel warm those in need. A total of 140 emergency response volunteers and 49 staff were engaged by Belarus Red Cross for this operation. Red Cross emergency response volunteers were on duty 24 hours a day.

- Icelandic Red Cross contributed CHF 25,409 for the replenishment of the stocks used for distributions in DREF operation *Extreme Winter Conditions* (packed meals for Red Cross volunteer rescue teams, professional radio stations, torches), repairs of Belarus Red Cross emergency supplies warehouses and vehicles, support for running information help line, as well as training and equipment of search and rescue dog team.
- In October 2014, the IFRC Secretariat supported the National Society in the development of a consolidated plan of action to provide humanitarian aid to 4,000 displaced Ukrainian citizens and issued a DREF allocation of CHF 126,229. The IFRC's DREF operation supported 1,200 displaced through provision of vouchers for food and hygiene items, as well as contributed to the replenishment of the emergency stock that was used earlier to assist 1,200 people from Ukraine affected by population displacement.
- In addition to the IFRC's DREF allocation, ICRC has provided complementary support to Belarus Red Cross in the value of CHF 483,300 to cover the needs in winter clothes and food of 3,000 displaced people and strengthened the emergency response capacity of Belarus Red Cross. An EcoSec delegate was assigned by ICRC for three weeks to support Belarus Red Cross in setting up the operation and improving field monitoring at all levels. Swiss Red Cross supported the consolidated plan of action with a contribution of CHF 100,000 for 1,000 persons (clothes, shoes) and another CHF 45,000 for the repair/spare parts of seven all-terrain transport vehicles which the National Society needs badly for the distribution of goods. A DM/logistics delegate has also been deployed with this support. Icelandic Red Cross contributed CHF 50,000 to the DREF replenishment for the Belarus operation and also sent to Belarus a container load of winter clothing and footwear. Danish Red Cross contributed CHF 5,000 to provide psycho-social support training to 16 staff and volunteers involved in the operation at national and regional levels. The Swiss Embassy in Belarus supported the training Belarus Red Cross volunteers in basic homecare skills to provide assistance to elderly and disabled people.

Output 2.2.3: Support is provided to Belarus Red Cross to reach compliance with Minimum Security Requirements

Monitoring		
Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
2.2.3. Belarus Red Cross acts in compliance with Minimum Security Requirements	MSR is followed	Target partially achieved
Comments on progress towards outcomes		
No security incidents have been reported by the Belarus Red Cross during 2014.		

Business line 3: To grow Red Cross Red Crescent services for vulnerable people.**Output 3.1.1:** Support the National Society in HIV prevention and harm reduction activities

Monitoring	
Indicators	Year to Date Actual
3.1.1. Belarus Red Cross HIV programmes continue in 2012-2015	Target achieved
Comments on progress towards outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belarus Red Cross has continued implementing its HIV programmes, supported both bilaterally and multilaterally. Since 2011, Belarus Red Cross has worked to introduce gender oriented approaches in HIV prevention and harm reduction programming, to improve access to comprehensive harm reduction services for female injecting drug users (IDUs), as well as to strengthen capacity of local organizations providing services to IDUs. In 2014, this work was supported by the IFRC Secretariat and the Italian Red Cross through the project <i>Enhanced access for female IDUs to HIV prevention and harm reduction services</i> implemented in Grodno region in close cooperation with key HIV service organizations. With the support of Italian Red Cross, Belarus Red Cross and the IFRC Secretariat continued their joint efforts aimed at further strengthening and improvement of the established HIV prevention and harm reduction services in Grodno and Lida. Based on partnership network established in Grodno, a mobile team of specialists (infectious diseases specialist, gynaecologist, psychologist or legal consultant) continued visiting the Red Cross district branch in Lida to facilitate meetings of female IDUs and their immediate environment. In addition, target beneficiaries both in Grodno and Lida were provided with humanitarian assistance package (food parcels, hygiene kits, vitamins, etc.) designed according to their individual needs. The activities in 2014 also included the service offered by a crisis consultant. 	

Output 3.2.1: Promote social cohesion and address discrimination and exclusion by implementing effective anti-trafficking programmes and contributing to the work of the European Red Cross Anti-Trafficking Network

Monitoring		
Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
3.2.1. Anti-trafficking programmes continue in 2012-2015	Programmes are implemented	Continuous activity
Comments on progress towards outcomes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2014, Belarus Red Cross implemented two anti-trafficking programmes, <i>Volunteering to prevent trafficking in human beings</i> (funded by Icelandic Red Cross) and <i>Combating trafficking in human beings</i> (funded by IOM). During 2014, the project <i>Volunteering to prevent trafficking in human beings</i> has progressed well towards achieving its intended objectives. The partners engaged in project activities have all extended their cooperation with Belarus Red Cross. Skilled and enthusiastic volunteers stay on with the project and continue developing their community-based initiatives and new forms of prevention activities. They put continued efforts in mobilising additional external support (e.g. participate in small-grant competitions of other organizations like IOM) which enables the Red Cross to run complementary activities. Volunteers receive all necessary induction, training and tools for planning and implementation of their activities targeting those at risk of being trafficked and abused. Red Cross <i>Helping Hands</i> centres act as accelerator platforms for anti-trafficking activities in Vitebsk and Gomel regions. During the reporting year, a total of 507 volunteers have worked to meet the project objectives and 87 		

VoTs received reintegration assistance at the *Helping Hand* centres in Gomel and Vitebsk. This number also includes 10 VoTs assistance with project funds in Mogilev and one VoT assisted at the National Society headquarters. The Red Cross reintegration assistance package includes food and hygiene items, clothes, psychological and medical support (with the help of the Red Cross Visiting Nurses Service and partner organizations), vocational training and social support. The VoTs are referred to other state and non-state organizations if necessary. Volunteer-led activities include community-based initiatives, trainings, actions, exchanges and info-sessions both in regional centres and in smaller towns.

- The ideas and achievements gained during the implementation of this project are regularly shared with the project *Combating trafficking in human beings* (funded by IOM). The network of state and non-state actors involved in an open and productive dialogue on the challenges of human trafficking is established and contributes to securing the sustainability of project outcomes. Multidisciplinary groups are functioning in Gomel and Vitebsk regions, uniting the main state and non-state stakeholders to fight the problem of human trafficking together. At the international level, project achievements are disseminated through the *European Red Cross Anti-trafficking Network*.

Output 3.5.1.: Promote social mobilization and empowerment approaches, further develop National Society volunteering base among all ages and encourage inter-generational initiatives

Monitoring	
Indicators	Year to Date Actual
3.5.1. Empowerment approaches are integrated in new projects and programmes; participation of older people, minority groups in different spheres of life has increased by 20%	Targets achieved, see details below
Comments on progress towards outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the reporting period, the IFRC Secretariat and other partners continued to promote social mobilization and empowerment approaches. • In 2014, the project <i>Support to people with mental illnesses</i> has seen the completion of its second year of a three-year cycle of implementation. The project objective is to promote participation and social inclusion of people with mental illnesses in the capital city, Minsk, by strengthening the capacity of, and the cooperation between, Belarus Red Cross and relevant state and non-state actors in Belarus. The <i>Open Home</i> was established in 2013 in the framework of this project by Belarus Red Cross in partnership with Icelandic Red Cross and the IFRC Secretariat. The <i>Open Home</i> is set up based on the Icelandic Red Cross model of day centres for people with mental illnesses. With the main focus in 2014 being running <i>Open Home</i> for people with mental illnesses and increased advocacy, much has been achieved in this year. Very good foundation has been laid both regarding <i>Open Home</i> itself and the advocacy work in a relatively short time. In September-October 2014 a poster exhibition advocating for non-discrimination of people with mental illnesses was produced and launched. The exhibition contains 24 large photos of the guests, staff and volunteers of the <i>Open Home</i>. A Facebook page² is updated regularly to promote the <i>Open Home</i> to wider audience. The page contains photos of activities, short stories and articles on mental health. • There are a number of success stories with very clear positive impact and empowerment in the lives of the <i>Open Home</i> guests. Friendship and peer support have developed among the guests, they help each other out at home as well, see each other outside opening hours and encourage each other to be active in life. <i>Open Home</i> has created a good platform for the guests to promote an active life. One of the guests has become a 'peer counsellor' and is advocating for <i>Open Home</i> in his group of acquaintances and in 	

² <https://www.facebook.com/openhome.by>

psychiatric services. In November 2014 Icelandic Red Cross and the IFRC Secretariat facilitated a visit of Icelandic singer Högni Egilsson to *Open Home*. The event was covered in the national media and at IFRC's webpage: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/news-stories/europe-central-asia/belarus/belarus-icelandic-celebrity-visits-open-home-of-the-belarus-red-cross-67594/>

- During the reporting period, the IFRC Secretariat, Belarus Red Cross and Ministry of Interior (Mol) have worked with the three penitentiary institutions and inmates targeting improved legal awareness, motivation and coping skills of ex-offenders, as well as prepared the ground for improved social inclusion opportunities in the target communities of Mogilev region. Red Cross support to inmates in the three target penitentiary institutions is becoming increasingly tangible and highly valued both by offenders and prison authorities. The Red Cross is progressively viewed by offenders not as charity but rather a humanitarian organization which takes a neutral and impartial position and protects human dignity and life in and out of prison, and in the battlefield during wars. The established partnerships and signed agreements with key actors in reintegration process (health, education, social and employment bodies, Mol and internal affairs departments) have also enabled the Red Cross to affectively assist ex-offenders and their families. All relevant actors are aware of the Red Cross mandate and how it links with their own support functions in the process of social reintegration of ex-offenders.

Business line 4: To heighten Red Cross Red Crescent influence and support for our work.

Output 4.3.1: Reduce dependence on single partners while maintaining and expanding existing partnerships and establishing new and innovative partnerships

Monitoring		
Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
4.3.1. Belarus Red Cross is assisted in communication with government and external donors, sharing information and plans to develop new partnerships	Continuous activity	Target achieved
Comments on progress towards outcomes		
In the reporting period, the IFRC Secretariat's Country Representation worked on expanding its existing partnerships and establishing new and innovative partnerships. As a result, the Belarus Country Plan for 2014 has been well covered, with contributions from Icelandic, Italian and Japanese Red Cross Societies, DFID Partnership grant and EuropeAid.		

Business line 5: To deepen our tradition of togetherness through joint working and accountability.

Output 5.1.1: Maintain regular coordination and dialogue between Movement and non-Movement partners (EU, UN agencies) regarding our main areas of focus in Belarus

Output 5.1.2 Promote increased National Society participation in international dialogue and cooperation, including through ERNA and other relevant networks

Monitoring		
Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
Coordination and dialogue with partners ongoing throughout 2012-2014. Belarus Red Cross active participation in international fora during 2012-2014	Regular dialogue	Target achieved

Comments on progress towards outcomes

- During the reporting period, the IFRC Secretariat's Country Representation has continued facilitating regular coordination and dialogue between Movement partners as well as promoting increased National Society participation in international dialogue and cooperation, including through *European Red Cross Anti-Trafficking* and other relevant networks.
- The IFRC Secretariat's Office in Belarus also supported the establishment of twinning cooperation between Belarusian and Norwegian Red Cross societies. A visit on 11-14 September 2014 by Møre & Romsdal regional branch of Norwegian Red Cross to Minsk city branch of Belarus Red Cross resulted in signing a three-year Twinning Cooperation Agreement with the focus on capacity building, training and involvement of volunteers in developing and implementing needs-based activities within disaster management, care and youth.

Output 5.3.1.: Belarus Red Cross contributes to achieving the aims of Strategy 2020 through implementation of its new strategic development plan and on-going activities.

Monitoring

Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
5.3.1. Strategic directions are followed throughout 2012-2015	On-going activity	See details below

Comments on progress towards outcomes

Belarus Red Cross contributes to achieving the aims of Strategy 2020 through implementation of its strategic development plan that was adopted in 2011. The on-going activities are in line with the National Society's strategic directions laid down in the Strategic plan.

Output 5.4.1.: Support capacity building in National Society programme monitoring and reporting.

Monitoring

Indicators	Annual Target	Year to Date Actual
5.4.1. Belarus Red Cross adheres to IFRC monitoring, evaluation and reporting standards	Continuous activity	Continuous activity

Comments on progress towards outcomes

The IFRC Secretariat's Country Representation has established and maintains standard monitoring and reporting procedures. However, additional training is needed due to change of reporting templates and new staff joining the National Society. No overdue reports were registered in the reporting period.

Stakeholder participation and feedback

A mid-term review of the project *Support to people with mental illnesses* was carried out in October 2014 by Icelandic Red Cross and IFRC Secretariat experts. The review involved a number of meetings with various stakeholders: Belarus Red Cross senior management, project staff and volunteers, users of the services, the IFRC Secretariat's Country Representation, medical institutions, media, etc. A key purpose of the review was to help all stakeholders reflect on what has worked well and what has not, and thus learn from the review process. The main observation was that a very good foundation was been laid both regarding the *Open Home* itself and the advocacy

work in a relatively short time. Observations and discussions sparked off a number of new ideas and recommendations. According to the guests the possibility to come to the *Open Home* is of tremendous importance. Most of them have only been visiting the centre for a short time, from three to eight months, but it is already making a positive difference in the lives of most of them. The staff of the *Open Home* observe positive changes in the guests. During the mid-term review sessions in October 2014 all the guests expressed their association with and attachment to the *Open Home*. They felt that the Home has had a positive impact on their lives. They stated that there is prevalent prejudice in Belarusian society regarding mental illnesses. But they feel that coming to the Home, even if only for an hour, breaks their isolation; some feel more communicative, more rehabilitated, more respected; some mentioned the good feeling of belonging; they value the communication with others in similar situation; that they can choose if they participate or not; one said that illness is not the only issue in my life now; some feel it contributes to less prejudice. Furthermore most feel that individual sessions with the staff regarding their personal development are helpful. Following are some statements made by the guests *“the communication with others in the same situation is the best medication...I have made friends here...I do not feel sick while I am here... it’s like rest from being sick, after coming here...my communication with my family is much better now...I have finally managed to finish my studies...coming here is a break from the voices in my head”*.

In November 2014, the project *Volunteering to prevent trafficking in human beings* was reviewed by an expert from the IFRC Secretariat’s Europe Zone Office. The review took four working days and involved meetings in Minsk and field visits to the regions of Vitebsk and Gomel. During the review, individual and group interviews were conducted with representatives of the IFRC Secretariat, Belarus Red Cross headquarters and regional branches of the Belarus Red Cross as well as with authorities at the local and central level. Furthermore, beneficiaries and educators of information sessions from partner organisations also participated in individual and group interviews. The review concluded that within this project cycle, Belarus Red Cross has maintained and improved individualised access to re-integration assistance, psychosocial support, education and legal services for victims of trafficking. Individualised support also ensured gender sensitive approach in project activities. The National Society is viewed as an essential and indispensable partner for key national stakeholders in anti-trafficking work. There is a general feeling among state and non-state representatives interviewed that Belarus citizens are more and more aware of the risks of trafficking in general. At the end of information sessions, this is measured by filling in questionnaires about the topic with participants of the workshops. According to feedback from Belarus RC branches, after RC prevention activities a national telephone Hot-line against human trafficking registers more calls and also more VoTs apply for assistance – both are indicators of impact. One of the most important lessons learned of the project so far is that a comprehensive approach combining three components of counter trafficking work (prevention, assistance and advocacy) is key to combating trafficking in human beings. Institutional sustainability of project activities is ensured by a number of cross-links to other projects’, NGOs’ and state authorities’ activities, and the extensive volunteering network of Belarus Red Cross. Volunteers now have more ownership of micro-projects and feel responsibility for those who are trained. Julia Sikorskaya, a leader of one of the projects: *“The problem of human trafficking is really huge in our country and in eastern Europe in general. For our project we decided to target not only young people, but also children. We have had a huge increase in child pornography in Belarus lately, so we wanted to warn as many children as possible. Of course, one info-session is not enough and we would like to come back to the same children at some point in future to give them more training and check what they remember”*.

According to the National Society PSS service beneficiaries, the link with the Red Cross and its psychosocial support services is also of tremendous importance, in particular for lonely people in remote areas. Following are some statements made by the beneficiaries of project *Psychosocial support in crisis*: *“our meetings are of great support for us, some of us I have known before but we did not meet often as we live in neighbouring communities...initially we were wondering why we need to come together to discuss a certain topic but now we are eager to meet and to talk to each other. Very often we have no one nearby to talk to. This is of great help...thanks for the vitamins as we can’t afford buying them, but what you do in addition to vitamins is giving us hope... we appreciate the possibility to talk to someone, to share common concerns, hear some good advice and find solutions...we are not feeling lonely anymore.”*

Key Risks or Positive Factors

Key Risks or Positive Factors	Priority	Recommended Action
	High Medium Low	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Belarus Country Plan for 2014 was well covered, however its coordination component (IFRC Secretariat's Representation in Belarus) was heavily underfunded which put at risk the continuity of services provided by IFRC Secretariat at country level. 	H	In conjunction with Europe Zone Resource Mobilisation, approach National Societies for unrestricted (non-earmarked) funding or secure that IFRC Secretariat staff are programme funded.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going economic crisis and international isolation of Belarus, if continued, may further aggravate the social situation, whereby the number of people in need would increase and without a matching increase in social support this would lead to deteriorating conditions for vulnerable people. 	M	Address this by humanitarian diplomacy, promotion of Red Cross values, strengthening capacities of Belarus Red Cross in advocacy, dialogue and cooperation between relevant international and national actors.

Lessons learned and looking ahead

The programmes supported by the IFRC Secretariat in Belarus are designed to strengthen the National Society's capacities in priority areas and guide towards the fulfilment of strategic goals. Through these programmes Belarus Red Cross with the technical and financial support from the IFRC Secretariat will continue to address a range of vulnerabilities that affect socially excluded groups, primarily poor access to healthcare, living in material poverty and isolation, and lacking communication with, and access to, decision-makers.

In 2015, Belarus Red Cross, Icelandic Red Cross and the IFRC Secretariat will focus on shaping Red Cross mental health services in line with the recommendations of the review report. Approaches to volunteer management in the *Open Home* will be aligned with those established in Belarus Red Cross and will comply with the National Society Volunteer Strategy for 2015-2020. The staff of the *Open Home* will also get trained in volunteer management, the work of the centre will become more structured and the staff will be able to plan the number of volunteers they need each day. More trainings will be conducted for Belarus Red Cross staff and volunteers with the purpose to provide specific knowledge and skills on working with people with mental illnesses. This training module will also be rolled out to other regions of Belarus. During the workshops, the poster exhibition will be displayed. The first workshop (and exhibition) are planned to be held in Brest, with invitation of the Honorary Consular of Iceland in Belarus for the opening. Partnerships with key stakeholders will be further strengthened and celebrities will be approached for their possible involvement in advocacy campaign promoting mental health, attracting attention, activating supporters and increasing visibility. All the experiences gained during the project implementation will be further shared through the network of Belarus Red Cross branches and other National Societies.

Belarus Red Cross, Icelandic Red Cross and the IFRC Secretariat will also work towards implementation of the recommendations of the mid-term review of the project *Volunteering to prevent trafficking in human beings*, including: it is recommended that Belarus Red Cross continues working in the field of combating human trafficking; using the already available technical expertise within the *European Anti-trafficking Network*, it is recommended that the exchange of experience with other Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and between volunteer groups is strengthened; Belarus Red Cross shall further explore possibilities for engaging former VoTs in the general activities of the organisation; it is recommended that the Red Cross team in Minsk region also gains access to reintegration assistance, psycho-social support, education and legal services for victims of trafficking and abuse; material circumstances of the *Helping Hands* centres both in Vitebsk and Gomel could be improved; it is recommended that Belarus Red Cross organises training

for journalists on THB (potentially in cooperation with other, already existing partners). In addition, the Belarus Red Cross will consider the possibility to start working with the migrants and to explain them the danger of human trafficking. Joint activities are intended to be carried out with the Lithuanian Red Cross within cross-border cooperation on combating human trafficking and addressing the needs of VoTs. Manuals and peer education materials from the Serbian and Croatian Red Cross Societies will be translated and printed in 2015. A special module for children used in Gomel in 2014, will be further developed and upgraded to a bigger educational module and introduced in the regions. Reintegration assistance will be further provided where needed, so as to fill the gaps or ease the access to IOM-funded assistance (e.g. covering travel costs for the victim from a remote district to reach the IOM rehabilitation centre in Minsk). Reintegration assistance may also be needed in other regions of Belarus, not directly targeted by this project, thus ensuring that every victim will get the support needed and will not be left out. At the same time, Belarus Red Cross will further explore possibilities for reaching out to the most vulnerable groups, e.g. youth from remote areas, orphans and people with disabilities.

To contribute to a better service delivery and a more efficient referral mechanism, Belarus Red Cross takes part in a working group organized by IOM on improvement of the National legislation of Belarus in the field of human trafficking. The law on human trafficking currently in force limits possibilities for NGOs involvement (especially in identification of VoTs). The joint initiative of the Ministry of Interior and IOM is to develop together with civil society organizations comments and explanations to the law ensuring that NGOs remain active and eligible actors in the counter-trafficking field. The first working group meeting was conducted in December 2014, with further steps planned for 2015.

With continued technological developments and involvement of many states in nuclear and radiological activities, as well as an increase in the number of technological accidents and disasters, including the nuclear disaster in Fukushima Daiichi, Japan, the IFRC Secretariat sees the need in further strengthening of Belarus Red Cross's preparedness to respond to nuclear and radiological accidents, as well as to other technological disasters.

Financial situation

[Click here to go directly to the financial report.](#)

<https://fednet.ifrc.org/Docs/LTPF%20Process/Development%20Operational%20Plans/2014/SP567BY14arf.pdf>

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace.**

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this report, please contact:

- **In Belarus Red Cross**

- Viktor Kolbanov, Secretary General

email: info@redcross.by; phone/fax: +375 17 227 14 17

- **In IFRC Secretariat Country Office in Belarus**

- Sergei Boltrushevich, Head of Office

email: sergei.boltrushevich@ifrc.org; phone +375 17 223 34 46

- **In IFRC Secretariat Europe Zone Office**

- Elkhan Rahimov, Head of Country Cluster

email: elkhan.rahimov@ifrc.org; phone: +36 1 888 4510